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Composer Mentors: A Model for Community Engagement, Service Learning, & Learning by Teaching

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INTRODUCTION

The small undergraduate Music Composition studio faces many challenges, including: 1.) short and poorly attended concerts, 2.) ad hoc and hyper-specialized outreach and recruiting activities, 3.) difficulties in cultivating authentic service learning opportunities, and 4.) identifying, serving, and recruiting largely self-taught and self-produced pre-college composers.



In response to the above, I founded the **UT Tyler Piney Woods Young Musicians Collaborative** in Fall 2014, matching local high school students interested in composition with UT Tyler students in a semester-long mentoring experience. The program culminated in a recorded reading-rehearsal concert of the created works, performed by volunteer UT Tyler music students, in conjunction with our usual Composer Readings Concert of UT Tyler students' original works.

RESULTS



This project was sponsored by the CMS Fund's 2015 Community Engagement Seed Grant Support Award. The stipend paid for blank CD-R's for distribution of the recording, and 75 flyers to advertise the event.



The audience joined the participants, mentors, and performers in an open Q&A session after the event to discuss the composing and mentoring processes.

Concert attendance was approximately 55, up from the typical Composition event range of 9 to 30 attendees. The event lasted nearly 60 minutes, not including discussion, which was more than twice the length of a typical Composition concert, which often features only 2 to 4 UT Tyler student works.

FEEDBACK

Feedback was wholly positive, with participants praising both the learning and the performance opportunity, and the mentors themselves noting the novelty and pedagogical usefulness of the experience. Two mentors found themselves applying composition techniques, emphasized by their own Composition instructor in applied lessons, to the mentoring sessions. All in attendance joined in the Q&A, echoing the participants' and mentors' positive experiences.

FUTURE PLANS

This project was quite successful in expanding our concert's length, outreach, and impact. It has great potential as a future service learning and recruiting tool. Future project plans include:

- Run the program every Fall
- Use 3-6 Participants, from 3 to 5 H.S. / M.S.'s
- *Require* all Composer Readings students to mentor
- Have for-credit Chamber Music Ensembles perform

